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Submission No 6

NETWORK TEN

20 March 2008

Mr Simon Finn MP
Chair, Broadcast of Parliament Select Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane QLD 4000

Dear Mr Finn MP,

Submission by Network Ten to the Broadcast of Parliament Select Committee

Network Ten (Ten) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Broadcast of Parliament Select Committee (the Committee) review. This submission outlines Ten's views in relation to the terms of reference of the Committee's review.

(a) Examine the regimes and systems for the broadcast of Parliament in other Australian jurisdictions, and in those Parliaments in other jurisdictions that have their own cameras, the use of the Parliament's broadcasts by local media.

Ten considers the Queensland Parliament is one of the most open in Australia for television broadcast coverage. Whilst a comparison with other jurisdictions is warranted, we consider that harmonising the broadcast system with regimes in other Australian jurisdictions may lead to the deterioration of coverage of Parliament and an increase in cost to taxpayers.

The Federal Parliament has an extensive in-house camera system that would be expensive to replicate. To bring Queensland's internal broadcast to such a standard would result in a significant cost to taxpayers. Furthermore, the in-house system is subject to greater restrictions on what may be broadcast.

Other jurisdictions such as Victoria, South Australia and the ACT Legislative Assembly allow for independent television cameras to film Parliament, subject to greater restrictions.

For more than a decade the current system has achieved the objectives for broadcasting Parliament proceedings. In 1996, strict rules were agreed to for camera coverage of Parliament in Queensland, including rules regarding the broadcast of pictures of members of parliament. Over the years any issues in relation to this coverage have been resolved in negotiation with the Speaker of the day, without any need to enforce sanctions. These rules include banning an offending television station from Parliament coverage for a period of time. Ten considers the current rules to be sufficient but is happy to discuss this issue.

(b) Assess the Queensland Parliament's broadcast system to:

- **Determine the quality of material, to ensure it is sufficient for the television media's reporting purposes; and**

- **Recommend any enhancements to the video broadcast of Parliament, if necessary.**

Ten supports live video and audio broadcast of Parliament online using the parliamentary telecast system. However, the two television network cameras placed on the Parliament floor provide a greater range of camera shots than the fixed wall cameras of the parliamentary telecast system. For example, our camera operators can quickly adapt to proceedings to film the reactions of Members of Parliament.

In contrast, the in-house system provides inflexible coverage with a smaller range of camera shots. For example, the fixed cameras provide only limited 'wide' shots of the government, opposition and back of the chamber by way of 'reaction' camera shots.

It has been suggested that the proposed in-house system will result in enhanced coverage. One reason put forward is that the broadcasters' television cameras have not entered the House outside of the 9.30 am - 11.30 am session. However, over the years broadcasters have frequently filmed parliamentary proceedings such as debates and statements made later in the day. Broadcasters designate a pool of cameras to stay throughout the day in case a newsworthy issue arises. Clearly, reporting deadlines and public interest are key considerations as to the use of the cameras and the broadcast of Parliamentary proceedings.

The television network cameras were introduced in a negotiated trial more than twelve years ago. The television networks paid to install the system and meet the ongoing expense at no cost to taxpayers. We consider the system has worked well and any minor complaints over the years have been resolved by negotiation with the Speaker of the day, with no need to invoke penalties under the strict rules of broadcast access.

- (c) Consider and recommend any appropriate Standing Orders and guidelines in the event that the committee finds the current video broadcast system does not meet and cannot reasonably be upgraded to meet present standards of coverage.**

Ten supports the objective of achieving a modern, open Parliament through the broadcast of chamber proceedings and utilising the latest technology. Ten considers the current system utilising television network cameras significantly contributes to upholding the high standards of conduct in Parliament and better reflects proceedings in the chamber than the fixed-camera coverage with limited camera shots.

We consider television viewers should have the flexibility in viewing parliamentary proceedings as any member of the public can witness from the public gallery.

As discussed above, over the years any issues regarding the television networks' coverage have been resolved in negotiation with the Speaker of the day. The broadcast of Parliament is fundamental to ensuring an open and accountable institution. Any measures that result in reduced or more limited coverage may impact on this important objective. That Queensland does not have an upper house, unlike other state and federal parliaments, makes transparency, accountability and scrutiny of parliamentary proceedings even more vital than in other states.

Thank you for your consideration of our submission. I would be happy to address this submission in person at the public hearing on 8 April 2008.

Yours sincerely

Ross Dagan
Director of News